providing a precursor brine comprising an aqueous solution of a salt at a first density, said salt comprising cations consisting essentially of cations of one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals [having a first salt content]; and

mixing a water-soluble polymer with said precursor brine at a [sufficient] first concentration and under first conditions [sufficient], wherein said first density, said first concentration, and said first conditions are effective to produce a precursor polymer dispersion [wherein] comprising particles of said water-soluble polymer at a level of prehydration;

wherein, upon addition of a sufficient quantity of said precursor polymer dispersion to [at a sufficient concentration in] a final brine [having a second salt content], said precursor polymer dispersion produces a final polymer dispersion comprising a second concentration comprising final particles of said water-soluble polymer at a final level of hydration, said second concentration and said final level of hydration being effective at downhole conditions to [improve] maintain an effective level of a property of said final brine selected from the group consisting of rheology, fluid loss control, and a combination thereof.

2. (Once amended) A method for producing a precursor polymer dispersion for addition to a brine for use in drilling and completion operations comprising:

providing a precursor brine comprising an aqueous solution of a salt at a first density, said salt comprising cations consisting essentially of cations of one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals; and

mixing a first concentration of a water-soluble polymer with said precursor brine under first conditions, wherein said first [The method of claim 1 wherein said sufficient] concentration is [between] from about 0.5[-] pounds per gallon to about 4 [lb] pounds of said water-soluble polymer per gallon of said precursor brine, wherein said first density, said first concentration, and said first conditions are effective to produce a precursor polymer dispersion comprising particles of said water-soluble polymer at a level of prehydration;

wherein, upon addition of a sufficient quantity of said precursor polymer dispersion to a final brine, said precursor polymer dispersion produces a second dispersion comprising a second concentration of final particles of said water-soluble polymer at a final level of hydration, said second concentration and said final level of hydration being effective at downhole conditions to maintain an effective level of a property of said final brine selected from the group consisting of rheology, fluid loss control, and a combination thereof.

Please cancel claims 4-6.

7. (Once amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said [precursor brine comprises a salt selected from the group consisting of calcium salts, magnesium salts, sodium salts, potassium salts, aluminum salts, lithium salts, and

combinations thereof] salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof[; and

said first salt content comprises a initial density about 9-14 pounds per gallon].

Please cancel claim 8.

9. (Once amended) The method of claim 3 wherein

said [precursor brine comprises a salt selected from the group consisting of calcium salts, magnesium salts, sodium salts, potassium salts, aluminum salts, lithium salts, and combinations thereof] salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof[; and

said first salt content comprises a initial density about 9-14 pounds per gallon].

Please cancel claims 10-13.

[15] 14. A method for producing a precursor polymer dispersion for addition to a final brine for use in drilling and completion operations comprising:

providing a precursor brine [having a first salt content comprising a density of between] comprising [about 9-14 pounds per gallon of a] an aqueous solution comprising a salt selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof, said aqueous solution comprising said salt at a first density of from about 9 to about 14 pounds per gallon; and

mixing [between] from about 0.5 [-] to about 4 [lb/gal] pounds per gallon of a water-soluble polymer with said precursor brine under first conditions sufficient to produce a precursor polymer dispersion comprising a first concentration of particles of said water-soluble polymer at a level of prehydration;

wherein, upon addition of a sufficient quantity of said precursor polymer dispersion to [effective at a sufficient concentration in] a final brine [having a second salt content] , said precursor polymer dispersion produces a second concentration of final particles of said water-soluble polymer at a final level of hydration, said second concentration and said final level of hydration being effective at downhole conditions to [improve] maintain an effective level of a property of said final brine selected from the group consisting of rheology, fluid loss control, and a combination thereof.

[16] 15. (Once amended) A method for treating a high density brine for use in drilling and completion operations comprising:

providing a precursor brine comprising an aqueous solution comprising a salt consisting essentially of cations of one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals, said aqueous solution comprising said salt at a first density of from about 9 to about 14 pounds per gallon [having a first salt content];

mixing about 1 to about 2 pounds per gallon of a water-soluble polymer with said precursor brine [at a sufficient concentration and] under first conditions sufficient to produce a precursor polymer dispersion comprising a first concentration of particles of said water-soluble polymer at a level of prehydration;

wherein, upon addition of a sufficient quantity of said precursor polymer dispersion to [effective at a sufficient concentration in] a final brine [having a second salt

content], said precursor polymer dispersion produces a second concentration of final particles of said water-soluble polymer at a final level of hydration, said second concentration and said final level of hydration being effective at downhole conditions to [improve] maintain an effective level of a property of said final brine selected from the group consisting of rheology, fluid loss control, and a combination thereof[; and

mixing said sufficient concentration of said precursor polymer dispersion with said final brine].

Please cancel claims 17-20.

[22] 21. (Once amended) The method of claim 15 wherein said [precursor brine comprises a salt selected from the group consisting of calcium salts, magnesium salts, sodium salts, potassium salts, aluminum salts, lithium salts, and combinations thereof] salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof[; and said first salt content comprises a initial density about 9-14 pounds per gallon].

[23] 22. (Once amended) The method of claim [17] 16 wherein said [precursor brine comprises a salt selected from the group consisting of calcium salts, magnesium salts, sodium salts, potassium salts, aluminum salts, lithium salts, and combinations thereof] salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof[; and said first salt content comprises a initial density about 9-14 pounds per gallon].

Please cancel claims 24-26. 23-25

[27] 26. (Once amended) A precursor polymer dispersion [for addition to a final brine for use in drilling and completion operations] comprising:

an aqueous solution of a salt at a first density, said salt comprising cations consisting essentially of cations of one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals [a first salt content]; and

a first concentration of particles of a water-soluble polymer at a level of prehydration [in an amount effective at a sufficient concentration in a final brine having a second salt content to improve];

wherein, upon addition of a sufficient quantity of said precursor polymer dispersion to a final brine, said precursor polymer dispersion produces a final polymer dispersion comprising a second concentration comprising final particles of said water-soluble polymer at a final level of hydration, said second concentration and said final level of hydration being effective at downhole conditions to maintain an effective level of a property of said final brine selected from the group consisting of rheology, fluid loss control, and a combination thereof.

Please cancel claim 28.

Please add the following new claims:

--29. The dispersion of claim 26 wherein said first concentration is from about 0.5 to about 4 pounds per gallon. --

--30. The dispersion of claim 26 wherein said first concentration is from about 1 to about 2 pounds per gallon. --

--31. The dispersion of claim 26 wherein said density is in the range of from about 9 to about 14 pounds per gallon. —

--32. The dispersion of claim 26 wherein said density is from about 11 to about 13 pounds per gallon. --

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--33. The dispersion of claim 26 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. —

--34. The dispersion of claim 29 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. —

--35. The dispersion of claim 30 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. --

--36. The dispersion of claim 31 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. --

--37. The dispersion of claim 32 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. —

--38. The dispersion of claim 26 wherein said one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals are divalent alkaline earth metals.

--39. The method of claim 1 wherein said one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals are divalent alkaline earth metals. --

--40. The method of claim 2 wherein said one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals are divalent alkaline earth metals. --

--41. The method of claim 15 wherein said one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals are divalent alkaline earth metals. --

--42. A method for producing a brine for use in drilling and completion operations comprising:

providing a precursor brine comprising an aqueous solution of a salt at a first density, said salt comprising cations consisting essentially of cations of one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals; and

mixing a water-soluble polymer with said precursor brine at a first concentration and under first conditions, wherein said first density, said first concentration, and said first conditions are effective to produce a precursor polymer dispersion comprising particles of said water-soluble polymer at a level of prehydration;

wherein, upon addition of a sufficient quantity of said precursor polymer dispersion to a final brine, said precursor polymer dispersion produces a final polymer dispersion comprising a second concentration comprising final particles of said water-soluble polymer at a final level of hydration, said second concentration and said final level of hydration being effective at downhole conditions to maintain an effective level of a property of said final brine selected from the group consisting of rheology, fluid loss control, and a combination thereof; and

mixing said sufficient quantity of said precursor polymer dispersion with said final brine.

--43. The method of claim 42 wherein said first concentration is from about 0.5 pounds to about 4 pounds per gallon. --

--44. The method of claim 42 wherein said first concentration is from about 1 pound to about 2 pounds per gallon. —

--45. The method of claim 42 wherein said first density is from about 9 to about 14 pounds per gallon. --

--46. The method of claim 43 wherein said first density is from about 9 to about 14 pounds per gallon. --

C7 cont

--47. The method of claim 44 wherein said first density is from about 9 to about 14 pounds per gallon. --

--48. The method of claim 42 wherein said first density is from about 11 to about 13 pounds per gallon. --

--49. The method of claim 43 wherein said first density is from about 11 to about 13 pounds per gallon. --

--50. The method of claim 44 wherein said first density is from about 11 to about 13 pounds per gallon. --

--51. The method of claim 42 wherein said one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals are divalent alkaline earth metals.

--52. The method of claim 42 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. --

--53. The method of claim 43 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. —

C7 cont

--54. The method of claim 44 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. --

--55. The method of claim 46 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. --

--56. The method of claim 49 wherein said salt is selected from the group consisting of calcium chloride, calcium bromide, and combinations thereof. --

--57. A precursor polymer dispersion comprising:

a precursor brine comprising a salt at density, said salt comprising cations consisting essentially of cations of one or more multivalent alkaline earth metal;

a precursor polymer dispersion in said precursor brine comprising a first concentration of particles of a water-soluble polymer at a level of prehydration;

wherein, upon mixing of a sufficient quantity of said precursor polymer dispersion with a final brine, said precursor polymer dispersion produces a second concentration of final particles of said water-soluble polymer at a final level of hydration, said second concentration and said final level of hydration being effective at downhole conditions to maintain an effective level of a property of said final brine selected from the group consisting of rheology, fluid loss control, and a combination thereof. --

-- 58. The precursor polymer dispersion of claim 57 wherein said one or more multivalent alkaline earth metals are divalent alkaline earth metals. --

-- 59. The method of claim 2 wherein said first concentration is from about 1 pound to about 2 pounds per gallon. --

-- 60. The method of claim 1 wherein said density is from about 9 to about 14 pounds per gallon. --

-- 61. The method of claim 2 wherein said density is from about 9 to about 14 pounds per gallon. --

-- 62. The method of claim 1 wherein said density is from about 11 to about 13 pounds per gallon. --